

CAMPS

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## Turning Tragedy into Triumph



Crossroads for Kids' Liz Strom and Jeff Rumpf will welcome young people affected by 9/11 to Camp Wing.

By KEITH L. MARTIN

There are tennis camps, music camps and academic camps everywhere across the country, but starting this week, Camp Wing will establish a truly one-of-a-kind experience for a special group of children whose lives were all touched by the events of September 11, 2001.

continued on page 16

# Camp Wing Program Created for Children Affected by 9/11

continued from page one

Duxbury-based Crossroads for Kids will welcome some of these children to Camp Wing who've gone through immeasurable life changes in the last two-and-a-half years, dealing with life without one of their parents.

The inspiration for the program came from Crossroads' new executive director/CEO, Jeff Rumpf, who previously served as regional executive director of the Catholic Youth Organization in New York. While there, he helped implement the "Little Heroes" program that offered camps and getaways for children affected by 9/11.

He is hopeful that the 15-day "Finding New Hope" program at Camp Wing will not rehash the pain of that experience, but rather give children the skills to move forward and have an experience to benefit them in the future.

"This will be an intense, experiential program that builds self-esteem in a community of kindred spirits and helps them overcome challenges," said Rumpf. "[9/11] is always in the news and in their face...and we're making

sure these kids aren't left behind. Research shows if we do nothing with them, they face higher suicide rates, issues with drugs and alcohol and other risk behaviors and we don't want that to happen."

Rumpf said that the response to the program has been overwhelming, with nearly 100 kids from all over the United States signed up to come to Duxbury and be involved with the program.

The program will rely heavily on the current character-based structure of Crossroads' camping programs while utilizing arts and adventure with different age groups.

Kids aged seven to 11 will spend their days swimming, hiking, canoeing and other activities while nights will be spent with more arts-oriented activities, where they can express their feelings, said Rumpf. He added that these sessions are led by professional artists with experience in working with traumatized children.

Older kids aged 11-15 will spend their time in an adventure-based program composed of three, five-day



Laurie Rumpf works with youth in the camp's garden, teaching them to pick zucchini flowers that they will then cook as part of a frittata.

theme adventures: rocks and ropes, white water canoeing and mountain bike/trader canoe. In each activity, the youth will learn how to work and interact with others their own age.

"It builds teamwork with those who've been through a similar tragedy and allows them to overcome obstacles," said Rumpf.

Finding New Hope

Program Director Liz Strom said that she hopes participants have a positive camp experience during their stay at Camp Wing.

"We don't want their background to be the central focus, but rather the camp to be that focus" she said. "They all know what's bringing them together, so we'll have fun and have a great camp experience."

## Youth Go Camping for a Cause

For nearly 70 years, Camp Wing and Crossroads have offered children from around the state more than just the chance to canoe and craft, but rather to learn about themselves and others through a number of programs.

Each summer, the camp welcomes at-risk children to

continued on next page

continued from previous page  
its grounds to spend a few weeks out of their neighborhoods and in Duxbury's woods for positive and unique experiences that teach teamwork and self-esteem.

"The at-risk kids that come here are all good kids," said Rumpf. "These kids know all kinds of challenges, from poverty to homelessness to tough times in school, but these kids all want a shot. Crossroads looks at what they need and what experiences research shows us they need to succeed."

In both the creative arts programs for younger kids and adventure-based programs for older campers, Rumpf said the kids get to learn a number of positive lessons while at the camp. One of the newest parts of the camp is the Safe Children's Garden, named after current Crossroads board member and long-time leader Mike Safe, that helps kids from urban neighborhoods learn about agriculture and teamwork to successfully grow a garden.

That same formula of positive experiences and character building is also being implemented in a day camp for kids who call Duxbury and the South Shore home year-round as well.

"Camp Wing has worked with at-risk kids and that is now paying off for local kids," said Rumpf. "We have a whole branch for local kids that meets their needs and is making an impact on them. People recognize Crossroads as a great camp, but also a place for character development."

Separated into three different age groups, local youth spend the day at activities ranging from drama to drawing, but all incorporate building relationships with peers and increasing their own self-esteem.

"Looking at the recent [risk behavior] survey results at [Duxbury's] high school, I think that's one of the reasons so many have responded to the camp," said Rumpf. "People recognize Crossroads as a way to develop strong character and we incorporate that in our day camp. We take the intensity of our residential program, but use that in our day program."

Rumpf said the camp is also meeting the needs of many families searching for an affordable form of child care over the summer, especially working parents who are looking for a positive summer experience for their children.

"They want that top character-building element and for their children to learn the skills to become caring kids," he said.

Rumpf said the reaction from the community has been overwhelming this summer and that he hopes to incorporate more from those in Duxbury through "Revamp the Camp" days where local organizations or companies team up with camp kids to work on a service project.

While building a physical structure, said Rumpf, the organization working with the kids is also building a sense of community with its own membership and young people.

"The kids learn that you reap what you sow and all about hard work," he said. "They also learn about building that community spirit and building stepping stones."

With a diverse group of children at Camp Wing this summer, Rumpf said that the main goal is to help them all succeed in life, no matter the situations around them.

"We are building a community of kids, not just building one kid at a time," he said.

*For more information on Crossroads for Kids, including Finding New Hope, go to [www.crossroads4kids.org](http://www.crossroads4kids.org).*